

buildings in Michigan to the public and, according to press reports, credible threats of violence. In Arizona, electors met in an undisclosed location to safely cast their votes. These measures followed a last-ditch effort by 17 Republican attorneys general and more than half of the House Republican caucus joining in a lawsuit and accompanying an amicus brief before the Supreme Court, which incredibly argued that the Court should nullify the votes of more than 20 million Americans. These ludicrous arguments couldn't hide the true justification for joining this effort to undermine our democracy. The people who were protesting simply don't like the results of the 2020 election, and they don't want to turn their backs on President Trump.

The conservative-leaning Supreme Court summarily dismissed this effort outright, rejecting the lawsuit in an order on Friday evening, wasting no time in doing it. Despite repeated and forceful judicial rejections of their baseless allegations of fraud at attempts to nullify the votes of Americans, only 27 Congressional Republicans would publicly acknowledge the obvious President-elect of the United States, Joe Biden, as of last week.

Now that the electoral college has spoken, more Congressional Republicans are finally stepping up. The fact that it took 6 weeks for my colleagues to recognize reality and stop undermining our Democratic process is sad and disappointing. When we were sworn in as Members of Congress, we took a simple oath: support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It is not an oath to one person, nor one President; it is not conditional if one receives enough angry phone calls; it is not dependent on whether the responsibilities are difficult; and it is certainly not optional if one has to face a more challenging electorate. And yet, with the exception of only a few in this Senate Chamber, the silence in upholding this oath in the face of President Trump's blatant attempts to undermine our democracy has been overwhelming.

Just compare it to the courage shown by State and local election officials across the United States, including many Republicans, who always hasten to add that they had voted for President Trump; they were disappointed in the election of Joe Biden; but the election in their State, by their measure, was honest and fair. They don't enjoy the perks or protections we have here in Congress, but they stepped up and spoke up, and I respect them for it—proud Americans of both parties under personal threat for their integrity and defending an American election that the President of the United States wants overturned.

Senator MURPHY, the junior Senator from Connecticut, came to the floor on Friday and spoke eloquently about this threat to American democracy that has been playing out in plain sight—

the blatant and shameful attempt to use the power of the Presidency to overturn a free and fair election, an election which is the foundation of our democracy. Senator MURPHY reminded us about the fragility of our democracy and how it should never ever be taken for granted. He warned about collaborating in silence as these efforts are made to destroy it. "How Democracies Die." The poignant remarks and the outrageous actions of recent weeks reminded me of a dinner I hosted with the authors of a powerful book, "How Democracies Die." The authors, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, detail examples in which democracies are weakened, collapsed, and even destroyed. I recommend it as urgent reading to my colleagues in the Senate at this moment in our history. They highlighted the critical role of established political leaders in standing up, or failing to stand up, in key moments when events or persons threaten their democracies.

Venezuela, in the early 1990s—the key establishment party leader opportunistically sided with Hugo Chavez after a coup attempt, devastatingly, giving Chavez critical legitimacy he then used to gain power and bring his country to its current state of decline. I believe we have such a moment here that demands leaders of both parties to carry out their oaths of office and defend our treasured democracy. Quite simply, silence is unacceptable.

I am glad for what Senator MCCONNELL said this morning on the floor of the Senate. Perhaps Chaplain Black inspired him and will inspire others to step up and speak the truth.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, on a separate issue, I have given a big part of my life to this institution, the Senate, and I respect what we have been able to do on many occasions. Through honest give-and-take and compromise, we have been able to bring legislation to this floor to debate it, to consider amendments, to pass the legislation, and, ultimately, not only make a law but change the lives of Americans. We are at that moment where we need it again. And 10 of us—5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, as well as House Members—decided 3 weeks ago that enough was enough; we needed to show some leadership and try to work out a compromise between us for another COVID relief package. You see, it has been 9 months since we passed what was known as the CARES Act on the floor of the Senate, 96 to 0—overwhelming, unanimous, bipartisan decision—to spend about \$3 trillion not only to fight the pandemic but to restore our economy.

Thank goodness we did. It really gave us an opportunity to do something for America when it desperately needed it. We thought that the threat of the pandemic would soon ebb away, but it did not. It was not gone in 6 months, and it isn't gone today. In fact, in some places in America, it is worse now than

ever. My State of Illinois, despite the heroic efforts of my Governor and many others, is suffering with infections, hospitalizations, and, sadly, too many deaths. That is the reality of where we are today.

So this group of 10—5 Democrats, 5 Republicans—has been meeting for 3 weeks. We even met on Thanksgiving Day. We did a Zoom call and had some conversation about a phase of this that might be important for us to consider. I tell you that because we did produce a work product—one that I think is worthy of consideration immediately on the floor of the Senate. It was an effort to reach a spending target of \$908 billion to provide immediate assistance across the board in the United States, to extend unemployment benefits where they are desperately needed; to give help to businesses—some \$300 billion in new lending authority; to provide additional funds for SNAP, the food stamp program, which many desperate families turn to in order to feed their children; help to our farmers; help to the renters who would be facing eviction under their leases if we were to do nothing; help to hospitals and nursing homes and clinics, for we all know they are on the frontline of this battle; money for the testing of those who suspect they are infected with COVID-19; and more resources for the logistics of vaccinations.

The CDFI Program is an effort to extend lending authority, particularly in desperate communities that are battling both poverty as well as this pandemic. There is \$5 billion for mental health, and we certainly know we need it, for the psychological pressure that America is facing is obvious in so many ways. There is over \$80 billion in education and \$10 billion in childcare. We can't overlook the fact that many can't return to work because there is no childcare that they trust with their kids. There is help, as well, for expanding broadband. As our kids have to turn to remote learning in many places in America, broadband has to become a fact of life across this Nation. There is \$45 billion in the whole transportation system network that has been devastated by this economic downturn. There is \$10 billion for those in our Postal Service. They are working harder than ever, and we want to make sure that the men and women of the Postal Service, who do such a remarkable job, know that we have their backs. There are also extensions of spending authority for the CARES Act.

These are just a few of the things that we considered over the 3-week period, and we came up with a bill that spent \$748 billion. There were two items that were not included in the base consensus bill because we couldn't reach a consensus on them.

State and local government assistance I support completely. I know what my cities and my counties and what my State have gone through. They need help. We couldn't agree on including that in the package at this moment. I hope this changes even today.

Finally, on the issue of liability and immunity from liability, this has been one that has been raised by Senator MCCONNELL for months. He has basically said that nothing will move until he gets a provision, which I find objectionable, that was originally offered by Senator CORNYN.

Here is what it comes down to: Should people be able to go to court if they believe that they have been harmed or that members of their family have died as a result of the wrongdoing of people during this COVID-19 pandemic? Some argue that businesses should not have that possibility hanging over their heads, and that is what Senator CORNYN used as a basis for his provision, which makes it almost impossible for anyone to recover for any losses during COVID-19. Others believe that we need to show an even-handed approach to this on both sides: If we are going to be fair to businesses that are legitimately, in good faith, trying to protect their employees and customers, we should also leave the possibility open that those who are responsible for their actions need to be held accountable in court. I think it is a simple and basic provision that there be equity on both sides, not just for plaintiffs but also for defendants.

We tried mightily during the last several weeks, and I want to salute my colleagues who engaged directly in that effort: ANGUS KING, of Maine; TIM KAINE, of Virginia; CHRIS COONS, of Delaware; DICK BLUMENTHAL, of Connecticut; MAGGIE HASSAN, of New Hampshire. We offered a variety of options that we thought were reasonable and served the purpose of justice, but we couldn't reach an agreement.

The others on the Democratic side who were part of this overall effort deserve mention in the RECORD. I don't want to miss anyone, but I want to include, certainly, JOE MANCHIN, of West Virginia; MARK WARNER, of Virginia; and JEANNE SHAHEEN, of New Hampshire. To all of them, I thank them for bringing forth this measure.

Now it is going to be in the hands of leadership. I hope we can call it up this week. We should not go home without it.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

2020 ELECTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as the Republican leader rightly acknowledged a few moments ago, Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States, and our colleague KAMALA HARRIS will be the next Vice President of the United States. Leader MCCONNELL's Republican Senators ought to follow suit. They ought to acknowledge that Joe Biden will be the next President and that KAMALA HARRIS will be the next Vice President.

For the sake of the country, President Trump should take his cue from Leader MCCONNELL that it is time to end his term with a modicum of grace

and dignity—qualities that his predecessors took great pains to display during our grand tradition of a peaceful transfer of power.

Enough is enough. Our Republican colleagues, for the sake of our democracy and for the sake of the peaceful transition of power, should stop the shenanigans, stop the misrepresentations, and acknowledge that Joe Biden will be our next President. Enough is enough. Republican Senators and Republicans throughout the country should follow Leader MCCONNELL's lead and acknowledge now that Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, now on COVID-19, in a year full of grim milestones, yesterday delivered the grimmest yet—that more than 300,000 Americans have now died from COVID-19. This is greater than the number of American soldiers who died during the entirety of World War II—a population the size of St. Louis or Pittsburgh wiped off the map—300,000 American souls.

As trucks bearing the first shipments of vaccines fan out across the Nation—the first best hope for defeating the pandemic in the new year—we cannot lose sight of what we have lost this year. That is what the end of 2020 has brought—hope tinged by grief. It was an amazing sight yesterday to see the first American being inoculated against the disease—a nurse at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens, my home State of New York—but for so many, the vaccine has not come soon enough.

Let it be our tribute to those Americans we lost to do everything in our power to limit the losses in moving forward—to produce and distribute as many vaccines as are necessary and encourage every American—every American—to take the vaccine when it is available to him. There are 3 million doses of the vaccine that are already out the door, and another vaccine is already in the emergency authorization process. Still another vaccine candidate may be ready early next year.

As I said yesterday, the discovery of the coronavirus vaccine in the span of a calendar year is a crowning scientific achievement of the 21st century. Our job now is to ensure that the good work of America's scientists, biochemists, and medical research is brought to bear and that, given the tools, we finally stamp out COVID-19 from our country and begin the road to recovery. We need to fully fund not only the production of the vaccine but its distribution as well. The States need that money.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, it was a hopeful day yesterday as the first COVID vaccines in the United States were distributed to healthcare workers on the frontlines of the COVID battle, and later this week, the FDA will hold a meeting on an emergency use authorization for Moderna's COVID vaccine, meaning that we could have a second coronavirus vaccine authorized before Christmas.

If all goes well, we expect to have 100 million Americans vaccinated by March. That is a pretty amazing statistic when you consider that just a year ago, we didn't even know about the virus, and it is a tribute to the innovative power of the private sector and the efforts of Congress and the Trump administration to expedite vaccine development. It has been a long, hard year, but the light at the end of the tunnel is coming.

But, while yesterday was an encouraging day, we have more work to do on the COVID front.

First, we all need to keep following the CDC's recommendations. The roll-out of Pfizer's vaccine is wonderful news, but cases in the United States are still surging. Until we can get a lot more people vaccinated, we need to do everything we can to slow the spread of the virus and avoid overwhelming our hospitals.

Second, we need to pass another COVID bill here in Congress to provide additional funding for vaccines and deliver other urgently needed relief to our fellow Americans. Republicans, of course, have been trying to pass additional COVID legislation literally for months, and I am encouraged that, in the past few weeks, a number of Democrats have stepped forward to work with the Republicans to develop bipartisan legislation. Just yesterday, a bipartisan group of Senators released legislation along the lines of what the majority leader has advocated—targeted relief that focuses on our most critical needs in the areas where Republicans and Democrats agree. This includes important COVID priorities like vaccine funding, money for schools, and help for the hardest hit small businesses.

The Republicans and Democrats' ideal COVID bills might look very different, but there are a number of things that all of us agree need to be addressed, and we should—in fact, we must—pass legislation to take care of those priorities. I am thinking about vaccine distribution especially. We have been blessed with not one but two viable vaccines, with more on the horizon. We can't afford to undermine this success by failing to provide the resources that are necessary for widespread distribution.

The ball is in the Senate Democratic leader and Speaker PELOSI's court. We have bipartisan support for targeted relief to address our most critical priorities. In fact, the Democratic leader in the House noted on Sunday:

I think we need to get an agreement, and we need to get this bill passed. . . . Nobody